



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)

Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality 2024 for Prasanthi Nilayam & Muddenahalli Campus Students: A Brief Report

The Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality, initiated by the revered founder chancellor Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the early 1970s, aims to immerse students of SSSIHL in the rich tapestry of Indian culture, spirituality, and moral values. The inaugural session, "Summer Showers in Brindavan," held in 1972, introduced students to the profound teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads, covering themes such as the nature of truth, meditation, and the importance of devotion and self-discipline. Over the years, these courses have explored many spiritual and philosophical subjects, from the intricate relationship between man and God to the teachings of sacred texts like the Bhagavad Gita and the Ramayana.

The Summer Course's objectives are multifaceted: to offer a deep understanding of India's cultural and spiritual heritage, instill strong moral values, promote holistic development by integrating intellectual, physical, and spiritual education, and inspire students to lead lives of service, devotion, and righteousness. Each year's course follows a thematic structure, combining discourses, interactive sessions, and activities that provide practical insights into living a life guided by spiritual principles. For instance, the 1972 course focused on the Vedas and Upanishads, discussing their teachings and relevance to modern life. In 1973, the theme centered around the relationship between man and God, exploring the sanctity of the teacher-student relationship and principles of dharma. Subsequent years covered topics like the concept of Brahman and the spiritual heritage of India, the teachings of Krishna in the Mahabharata, the ideals depicted in the Ramayana, and the devotee-God relationship as outlined in the Bhagavata Purana.

2024 Summer Course Overview

This year's Summer Course, held from July 19th to July 20th, centered around the theme "Head of Shankara, Heart of Buddha, and Hands of Janaka." This theme symbolizes the integration of intellectual rigor, compassion, and selfless action, drawing inspiration from three iconic figures of Indian spiritual history: Adi Shankaracharya, Gautama Buddha, and King Janaka. Shankaracharya represents the intellectual pursuit of truth, Buddha embodies compassion and inner peace, and Janaka signifies righteous leadership through selfless action.

Proceedings of Day 1

The course began on July 19th at 8:45 AM with a ceremonial procession of the Poornakumbham, a sacred vessel symbolizing completeness, followed by the lighting of a ceremonial lamp at 9:00 AM, symbolizing the dispelling of ignorance and the dawn of knowledge. Prof. Pallav Kumar Baruah, Dean of Sciences, delivered the welcome address, highlighting the relevance of the year's theme and setting the stage for the sessions to follow. Prof. Baruah highlighted the significance of this year's theme, "Head of Shankara, Heart of Buddha, and Hands of Janaka," stressing the importance of intellectual rigor, compassionate understanding, and selfless action in today's world. His address was both inspiring and motivating, preparing the attendees for the enriching sessions to follow.



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)

over the next two days. His insights offered a thoughtful introduction to the profound teachings that the summer course aimed to impart, laying a strong foundation for the learning and spiritual growth of all participants.

Sri Venkatramana Gosavi, Senior Vice President and Global Head of Sales at Infosys Finacle, and State President of Karnataka South, delivered the inaugural speech. He reflected on his transformative experiences through his association with Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, emphasizing how Swami's teachings have profoundly shaped his life. Sri Gosavi underscored the importance of discipline, selfless service, and the profound impact of Swami's teachings, setting a reflective tone for the course and inspiring participants to deepen their spiritual understanding.

He passionately highlighted Swami's teaching that "all good works are God's works," emphasizing the inherent divinity in every act of selfless service. Drawing from personal anecdotes, he spoke on the path of Narayana Seva, where devotees actively engage in serving the needy and underprivileged. "Swami has always emphasized the importance of discipline," he reiterated, echoing Swami's words that discipline is a cornerstone of spiritual progress.

Sri Gosavi also recounted an incident from 2005: "Through disciplined efforts and Swami's divine blessings, we were able to extend our service to numerous villages, witnessing firsthand Swami's boundless compassion and love for all." In moments of introspection and spiritual contemplation, he shared how Swami's teachings have shaped his understanding of devotion and humility. "Swami has taught us to never take anything for granted," he reflected earnestly, "but to first pray ardently, practice His teachings diligently, and then seek His divine grace."

Following the inaugural speech, the Department of Performing Arts presented a music program, adding a vibrant artistic dimension to the event. This was followed by a divine benediction from Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He addressed the imbalance between rights and duties in today's society. He emphasized that while people are focused on their rights, they often neglect their responsibilities. True education, Swami stated, should cultivate discrimination, patriotism, and a commitment to serving society. He highlighted that real fulfillment comes from serving others and fulfilling one's duties with love and devotion. According to Swami, rights naturally follow when one honors their responsibilities, such as gratitude and fulfilling roles like being a student or parent.

Swami also stressed that virtues are more important than degrees or scholarly achievements. He lamented that while people may appear virtuous outwardly, they often harbor negative qualities within. He urged everyone to transform themselves into individuals of virtue, citing examples like Hanuman and Prahlad, who attained divinity through devotion and faith. Swami concluded by urging everyone to sanctify their lives by making every act holy and purposeful.

After Swami's discourse, Sri T. S. Balaramachandran, Senior Vice President and Head of Human Resources for South India at HDFC Bank and an alumnus of SSSIHL, gave a talk. He began by recalling the deep connection he felt standing where Swami once sat, likening it to Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's reflections on Lord Krishna's presence in Vrindavan. Despite Swami's physical absence, the speaker emphasized Swami's omnipresence.



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)

He shared an anecdote where Swami, when asked to pose for a photograph, playfully suggested taking a picture of an empty chair. The photo later developed to show Swami seated on the chair, illustrating his constant spiritual presence. The speaker also narrated a story about a devotee torn between pursuing Hindustani music training in Pune and staying at Swami's institution. Swami questioned the devotee's motive, ultimately teaching that his pleasure comes not from external achievements but from inner devotion. He then addressed the challenges of maintaining spiritual discipline, comparing the mind to an elephant that needs the guidance of willpower, the mahout. External rituals and disciplines are crucial until internal purity becomes natural, as seen in a devotee's struggle with impure thoughts during Darshan. The talk concluded with reflections on recognizing Swami's presence in all aspects of life, both through external rituals and internal purity of thought.

The afternoon session featured a quiz on Indian culture and spirituality, organized by Dr. N. Uday Kiran, Associate Head of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. The quiz was an engaging way to deepen the participants' knowledge while fostering a sense of fun and competition.

The night session for Prasanthi Nilayam Campus students featured a Parayanam session by Sri N. Sudhindran, General Manager of NutriflyToday and an alumnus of SSSIHL. He shared his journey of faith, recounting the miracles and lessons he encountered after joining Swami's Educare. Simultaneously, Muddenahalli students attended their Parayanam session with Sri D.V. Chandrasekhar, Senior Manager at SSSIHMS, Bangalore, who shared his divine experiences with Swami.

Proceedings of Day 2

On the morning of the second day, the session began at 9:00 AM in the Institute auditorium with bhajans and an invocatory Vedam by students from the Muddenahalli campus. Following this, Dr. Gopi Krishna Pidatala delivered an engaging talk on "SAI - Our Best Friend." With over 37 years of experience in healthcare, IT, and agriculture, Dr. Gopi Krishna has worked with global companies like Best Buy, UnitedHealth Group, and Walmart. His significant roles in India include positions with the National Dairy Development Board and serving as CEO of Oliver Advanced Health and Skin Clinics. He is also involved with various charitable foundations and educational initiatives.

During his talk, Dr. Gopi Krishna shared a poignant moment when Swami expressed joy over a small event he had organized, offering his feet for a Namaskar. Overwhelmed with gratitude, Dr. Gopi Krishna attributed this blessing to the merits of his previous birth, to which Swami replied that it was due to merits accumulated over hundreds of births. Dr. Gopi Krishna further elaborated on Swami's teachings, emphasizing the importance of good thoughts and actions over mere religious rituals. He shared Swami's advice on using "shutters" for the eyes and mouth to avoid seeing evil and speaking unwisely. Swami also emphasized the practice of Purva Tapa, or forethought, to consider the consequences of actions, using examples from the Mahabharata to illustrate the value of foresight.

He narrated a remarkable story of a Buddhist monk in Indonesia who was healed by applying vibhuti given by Swami's devotees. Intrigued by this, the monk visited Swami, who materialized a golden Buddha statue for him and promised to visit him every Thursday for spiritual discussions. The monk later confirmed Swami's visits, demonstrating Swami's ability to transcend physical boundaries. The talk concluded with an interactive question-and-answer session.



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)

His talk was followed by Swami's divine benediction, where He spoke about the essence of true education. Swami emphasized that true education goes beyond memorizing facts; it should cultivate good character, intellect, and values like truth, love, and service. For Swami, true education awakens the divinity within and prepares individuals to contribute positively to society.

Swami also highlighted that true education should instill qualities like humility, reverence, compassion, and self-control—leading to peace and happiness. He expressed concern that, despite advancements in science and technology, humanity is on a downward path, marked by fear, insecurity, and unrest among students. He pointed out that science alone is not enough; there must be the wisdom to use scientific discoveries for the right purposes. Swami concluded by stressing that modern education, focused solely on career goals, falls short of teaching the virtues necessary for a good and meaningful life.

Dr. Bala Subramanyam Karanam began his talk with a heartfelt invocation to Swami and reflected on his childhood in Puttaparthi and Prasanthi Nilayam, where he received his entire education. He expressed deep gratitude for Swami's teachings and shared his journey from village life to spiritual and academic fulfillment at Prasanthi Nilayam.

Dr. Karanam recounted significant moments from his life, including Swami's miraculous inauguration of a local State Bank of India branch by materializing gold coins. He also shared stories of his family's move to Prasanthi Nilayam and the impact of Swami's teachings on their lives. He vividly remembered his first visit to Prasanthi Nilayam, where, despite his young age, he felt a strong connection to Swami and a deep desire to stay and immerse himself in the spiritual community. Dr. Karanam's narrative highlighted the transformative power of Swami's presence in shaping his life and values.

On the final day, the afternoon session commenced at 2:00 PM with three skit presentations. These skits were performed by the undergraduate and postgraduate students from the Prasanthi Nilayam campus, as well as by the students from the Muddenahalli campus. Each skit was centered around the 2024 Summer Course theme and its relevance to contemporary life.

Skit by Prasanthi Nilayam Campus

The Post-Graduate students of SSSIHL, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, performed a skit titled "Head of Shankara, Heart of Buddha, Hands of Janaka" during the 2024 Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality. The skit highlighted that the qualities of Buddha, Shankara, and Janaka are shared among them. Buddha's compassion and enlightenment were shown alongside Shankara's intellectual depth and Janaka's active societal engagement. Similarly, Shankara's wisdom was paired with Buddha's kindness and Janaka's practical wisdom. Janaka's role as a king and sage demonstrated a balance of worldly duties with spiritual insight. The skit conveyed that these revered figures integrated wisdom, compassion, and action, inspiring the audience to embody these virtues in their lives.



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)

Skit by Muddenahalli Campus

The Muddenahalli students presented a skit blending the modern world with the eras of Adi Shankaracharya, Buddha, and Janaka. The narrative follows Arjun, a college student, who meets these figures in different roles—student, intern, and interviewee. Through these interactions, Arjun learns to balance academic pursuits with spiritual dedication. The skit emphasized that the true goal was to bring joy to Swami, reflecting the students' commitment and sincerity. It was well-received, resonating deeply with the audience and contributing to the students' personal growth.

Following the skit presentations, Sri Sanjay Sahani, Associate Professor in the Department of Management and Commerce, delivered the concluding remarks. He began with a heartfelt invocation: "Mukam karoti vachalam, pangum langhayate girim; Yat-kripa tam aham vande, paramananda-madhavam," expressing gratitude to the divine grace that enables the mute to speak and the lame to traverse mountains.

Sri Sahani reflected on March 1990, when Swami introduced the Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality and invited everyone to Brindavan. He recalled an instance from 1980, where Swami showed unwavering support for students involved in a drama despite performance issues, emphasizing the importance of students over the performance itself. He shared the story of Jesus' resurrection and his conversation with Thomas, highlighting the faith of students who have not seen Swami but believe in his presence. Sri Sahani also recounted a personal story of Swami's care for a student named Jairam, whom Swami healed with a piece of sugar candy, illustrating Swami's attention and love. He concluded with a quote from the Bhagavad Gita: "Yat karoshi yad ashnasi yaj juhoshi dadasi yat, yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kurushva mad arpanam," emphasizing that all actions should be offered to God. Sri Sahani encouraged everyone to transcend body consciousness and perform actions as divine offerings, ensuring their work remains spiritually fulfilling. He then delivered the vote of thanks. The two-day summer course concluded with a Mangala Aarati .

Conclusion

The 2024 Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality was a profound journey into the heart of Indian spiritual wisdom, providing students with deep insights into living a life guided by the principles of compassion, intellect, and selfless action. The event was a testament to the enduring legacy of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, inspiring the next generation to lead lives of service and spiritual growth.



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)





SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)





SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)





SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)





SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)





SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)

